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**Michael Schubert.** *Der schwarze Fremde: Das Bild des Schwarzafrikaners in der parlamentarischen und publizistischen Kolonialdiskussion in Deutschland von den 1870er bis in die 1930er Jahre.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003. 446 pp. EUR 70.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-515-08267-9.

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## Uncivilized Discourse

The controversy over the "African Village" exhibition staged in the Augsburg Zoo this June underscores the importance of investigating the social and cultural legacies of German colonialism. Scholarly discussions of the "African Village" in forums such as H-German put forth a number of thoughtful, contrasting interpretative frameworks: one stressed the historical weight of the *VÃ¶lkerschauen*; another emphasized the entrepreneurial agency of the participating performers and artists. Among the visitors to the exhibition, however, responses to the African village were more surprisingly consistent: a group of investigating anthropologists reported that many visitors both entered and left the exhibition making broad associations between Africans, wild animals, and nature.[1] Such "mental maps" resonate with a central argument long put forth by scholars of imperialism: namely, that the notion of Africans as "natural folk," so carefully constructed in the nineteenth century, has tenaciously outlasted the crucible of formal imperialism in which it was forged.[2]

Michael Schubert's book offers a solid and well-researched contribution to the burgeoning literature on the German colonial project. Centering his investigation on a discussion of the "Black Other" in colonialist writings, Schubert seeks to link these discursive descriptions of Africans to the political processes of Imperial Germany. His book is therefore not so much an archaeology of broadly circulating stereotypes (in the vein of Sander Gilman or Peter Martin) as it is a concrete case study of how a very specific rhetorical device could and did structure political debate in Imperial and Weimar Germany. In this regard, Schubert's research falls more in line with the German historiography of colonialism–still often closely engaged with institutional narratives and high politics–than with that British and French post-colonial literature that approaches colonialism primarily as a cultural practice of identity formation.[3]

Schubert's foray into the potentially limitless terrain of perceptions of the "Other" is narrowed considerably by his concentration on the two very specific types of sources mentioned in his subtitle: on the one hand, published parliamentary debates; and on the other, the publications of various organizations that actively promoted German colonial expansion (namely the books

and periodicals of the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*, and the often overlooked newsletters of missionary societies). By focusing so tightly on what he terms the "colonial discussion"–the arguments for colonial expansion that circulated in these publications–Schubert is able to address the topic all the more definitively. Yet this narrow focus lends considerably less support to his broader conclusions about national and racial identity in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany, and about the legacies of the image of the Black Other in the present-day Federal Republic.

Schubert's book is a reworking of his dissertation, and still bears much of that standard thesis scaffolding, including an outline/decimal-style table of contents and a huge array of lengthy, descriptive footnotes that chart the author's own path through the secondary literature. This last could prove quite useful to scholars new to the field, for they intelligently digest and annotate the German secondary literature on colonialism from the 1960s through the '90s. Thus, while Schubert's engagement with venerable debates, such as that over Hans Ulrich Wehler's thesis of social imperialism, might cover well-trodden ground, his notes summarize such arguments and counterarguments concisely, and with an eye towards current directions in cultural history.

*Der Schwarze Fremde*is divided into three chronological sections, each of which outlines the various interest groups involved in the "colonial discussion," and then describes the role that the image of the Black Other played in the positioning of these interest groups. The first section briefly describes German perceptions of blacks over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, before turning to a detailed analysis of the colonialist writers of the 1870s and '80s, from Friedrich Fabri to Wilhelm HÃ¼bbe-Schleiden. The second section covers the "colonial discussion" during Germany's tenure as a colonial power after 1885, from the anti-slavery campaigns of the 1880s, through the Herero revolt of 1904, the "Hottentot" elections of 1907, and the ensuing Dernberg reforms. The last covers the pursuit of "colonialism without colonies" in the Weimar era; and a broad-ranging conclusion links these images of the Black Other to post-1945 German perspectives on African poverty and underdevelopment.

Schubert's argument throughout is that tropes of the "Black Other" performed an integrative function, bringing diverse and sometimes conflicting interests together under a single, tidy, and quite elastic image. The image of the Black Other could simultaneously pander to the nationalist ambitions of the colonial enthusiast, fortify the self-fashioning of the missionary society supporter, and legitimize the strategies of the profiteer. Eventually, the tropes of Black Otherness came to dominate so thoroughly political language that even opponents of colonialism fell into using them. And at the heart of this discourse of the Black Other, and perhaps the secret to its flexibility, lay the notion that Africans were *kulturlos*–"without culture," or uncivilized.

In the decade before Germany declared sovereignty over African territories (1875-85), for instance, Schubert shows how the conviction that the African was *kulturlos* eased seamlessly into an argument about the need to "educate the Negro." Such "civilizing mission" rhetoric, in turn, served as an overarching rationale for the growing demand of overseas acquisitions. The discourse of "educating the Negro to work" (*Erziehung des Negers zur Arbeit*), for instance, offered a convenient coupling of philanthropy with the unmistakable glint of economic opportunism. Hanseatic traders who might otherwise be sympathetic to free trade rhetoric could be converted to the colonialist cause by the trope of "the lazy African middleman"–the black who (because *kulturlos*) willfully and arbitrarily blocked Europeans' fair and equal access to the wealth of the African interior. ("Educating" the African, in this case, included not-so-veiled promises of a commercial windfall, once the civilizing process had begun.)

Missionary societies, on the other hand, invoked the image of "*kulturloser* Negro" not as willful, but as child-like, and subject to fetishism and superstition. The missionary's role, then, was to "educate" the African to the possibility of his own salvation–and to the healthy, character-building habit of hard work, of course. "Educating" the African, in this missionary vision, furthermore, provided a clear rhetorical device with which to link missionary society efforts to Germany's need to demonstrate its national self-worth through such moral projects.

Even political groups opposed to colonialism fell into using variants of the Black Other in the course of their opposition. Left Liberals, for instance, referenced the "wildness" and "savagery" of Africa as a good reason to avoid entanglements there. And when Social Democrats made convoluted efforts to associate the oppression of German workers under capitalism with that of Africans under imperialism, they just as often ended up reasserting racial hierarchy, boosting the "civility" of the former by conceding the "wildness" of the latter.

The second section of Schubert's book, covering the

colonial era (from the mid-1880s to the First World War), offers the most detailed look at the intersection of discourse with politics. In the 1880s, for instance, the colonialist movement embarked on a nation-wide "anti-slavery" campaign in print and in the Reichstag, portraying Arabs as cruel slavers and blacks as helpless captives in need of a paternalistic force to free them. Such rhetoric allowed overseas expansion to take on the sheen of both moral and national imperative; colonialism, it was argued, would bring "Kultur" to Africa. This would dramatically demonstrate Germany's moral worth *and* national greatness. Meanwhile, the image of blacks as docile slaves simultaneously conveyed vague impressions of a vast, cheap, latent workforce in Africa–a workforce that, once the immoral Arab slave-traders were removed from the picture, would be at the disposal of the more civilized German economic interests.

Events in the colonies themselves could and did affect these tropes of the Black Other. Most centrally, the Herero uprising of 1904 chipped away at the "civilizing mission" overtones to the image of the *kulturlos* Black Other, and an incarnation laced with Social Darwinism emerged in the colonial discussion. Blacks were still thought "*kulturlos*," but were now declared to be fundamentally uneducable. The childlike Black, waiting for salvation, education, and direction, now morphed into a devilish and murderous savage–a savage whose permanently-*kulturlos* state formed a justification for segregationist and eliminationist ideologies. This Social Darwinist strain carried over into the Weimar era, and fed the racism of the National Socialists. Yet the older civilizing mission rhetoric flourished into Weimar as well, notwithstanding the loss of the colonies. For instance, the image of the "loyal Askari"–the black soldier who fought on behalf of the Germans–helped to recast Germany as a benevolent colonial master. In the process, the increasingly irrelevant colonialists sought to hitch their cart to the horse of Versailles Treaty resentment.

The historian conversant with research on the imperial cultures of the European metropolis and on European visions of Africans that has emerged in the last fifteen years will find little surprising in Schubert's arguments.[4] The usefulness of Schubert's book lies not so much in an innovative thesis as in the strength and detail of its evidentiary base, and in the incorporation of discourse analysis into a traditional realm of political history, that of political interest groups. Schubert's book breaks the most new ground in the area of missionary society discourse, particularly in his detailed dissection of Catholic missionary views and motivations. He shows, curiously, that unlike their Protestant counterparts, Catholic missionary publications rarely invoked the image of a Black Other that needed to be "educated to work." Instead, Catholics stressed a slightly different image, that of the "poor black heathen," suffering under the cruel oppressions of slavery, fetishism and polygamy. The trope of "deliverance from oppression" implied by this variant of the Black Other, Schubert argues, not only dovetailed with core elements of Catholic theology, but also resonated with Catholics' still-fresh memories of the *Kulturkampf*. And by cementing their own role in "saving" the poor black heathen, Catholic missionaries were able to affix themselves to the explicitly nationalist mission of colonial expansion, and thereby efface their own status as "outsiders" in the German nation.

One critique of Schubert's book is that the discourses that he charts and analyzes held a much more limited circulation than is explicitly acknowledged. The colonialist periodicals that Schubert combs comprised only a minute fraction of the oceans of text washing through Wilhelmine Germany, and so tended to circulate largely (although not solely[5]) among a self-defined club of colonial enthusiasts. The question then arises: what was the relationship of this bounded "colonial discussion" to the far larger world of Wilhelmine print culture? Popular ethnographic essays appeared regularly in *Die Gartenlaube* from the 1870s onwards, for example, and thereby enjoyed a circulation undreamed of by the editors of the colonialist press or the missionary newsletters. Did the greater nuance and intricacy evident in these earlier, ubiquitous ethnographic portrayals undermine or contradict the appealing simplicity of the trope of the "kulturloser Neger?" Or from a different tack: were the parliamentarians of the Left Liberal or Social Democratic parties aware that such papers as the *Kolonialzeitung* or the *Berichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft* even existed, let alone read such publications? If not, then by what other means did the image of the *kulturlos* Black Other reach them, to so saturate their rhetoric?

The limits of Schubert's source base become immediately apparent when the reader reflects on images of Black "Otherness" that are almost entirely absent in Schubert's book–namely, those with either an exotifying or erotic tinge. The colonialists of the nationalist right (unhappily saddled with Carl Peters's colonial sex scandals) and those of the missionary societies saw little merit in deploying eroticized visions of race. Yet such carnal incarnations circulated widely, even in the ostensibly staid Wilhelmine era. Do these "attractive" variants of blackness, evident in such diverse media as *Simplicissimus* car-

toons, racist postcards, and books of ethno-pornograpy, leave no imprint in the colonial discussion?

Along these lines, Schubert's heavy usage of the word *Bild* itself is a bit misleading; for his research deals exclusively with textual description and does not address visual imagery at all.[6] This omission is more striking than may seem at first glance; for pictorial imagery of Africans in European culture has a markedly different historical trajectory than textual discourses. Were the elastic, simple, textual descriptions of the *kulturlos* Black Other, "educated to work," offset by the sometimes more sensationalistic illustrations of racial difference in *VÃ¶lkerschau* posters, or alternately, by the alluring images of African exoticism in mass-marketed advertising? When Schubert's conclusion ties Wilhelmine images of the Black Other into contemporary visions of Africa as a poverty-ridden region of "underdeveloped" savagery, the question of the linkage between the official "colonial discussion" and the far broader field of popular culture becomes all the more acute.

Schubert's book is therefore perhaps best approached not as a cultural history of the "image of the black" but as a careful analysis of organized colonialist politics, and of some key colonialist discourses that drove, legitimized, and sustained them. The rationale for German colonization, as it circulated within a well-defined segment of German society, was certainly framed around a "Black Other." By charting the portability of this colonialist trope through the political arena, Schubert offers a solid and thorough addition to the literature. How this discourse interacted and competed with different images of Black "Otherness"–ethnographic, literary, artistic, commercial, popular–across different media, with different ramifications, however, remains an open question.

Notes

[1]. Nina Glick Schiller, Data Dea, and Markus HÃ¶hne, "African Culture and the Zoo in the Twenty-First Century: The 'African Village' in the Augsburg Zoo and Its Wider Implications" (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, 2005); available from `http://www.eth.mpg.de`. 38 percent of respondents, when asked "What do you think about presenting African culture in a zoo?", approved of the choice because they thought that nature and African culture fit well together (p. 34). As one visitor reflected, "Yes [the event] is a good idea in the zoo. Things like this should be presented in the zoo. The Africans are natural folk. They fit well with nature" (p. 31). It is worth mentioning in passing that there are 350 million Africans who live in urban areas–almost five times as many as the 73 million city-dwellers in Germany.

[2]. The literature on European views of "natural" or "primitive" peoples is vast. One overview is Z. S. Strother, "Display of the Body Hottentot," in *Africans on Stage*, ed. Bernth Lindfors (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 1-61; of particular interest is the essay collection by Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush, *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). For the German case, see especially Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); H-German review at `http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=158631077082686` and the essay collection of Matti Bunzl and Glenn Penny, *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); H-German review at `http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=60311068530917`.

[3]. Cf. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). An intriguing effort to bridge the divide between the more culture-oriented, "discursive" methodologies centered around race and the more "social" historical investigations centered around political economy or subaltern resistance is George Steinmetz, " 'The Devil's Handwriting': Precolonial Discourse, Ethnographic Acuity, and Cross-Identification In German Colonialism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 (2003): pp. 41-95.

[4]. One now-classic survey of European visions is Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

[5]. See John Phillip Short, "Everyman's Colonial Library: Imperialism And Working-Class Readers In Leipzig, 1890-1914," *German History* 21 (2003): pp. 445-75.

[6]. Indeed, he often uses the terms "image," "argument," and "discussion" more or less interchangeably–notwithstanding the very different practical and theoretical implications of each term.

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